

In the News

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Department of Interior approves funding for brown treesnake control

The U. S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) approved a \$2.65 million grant to assist with controlling the proliferation of brown treesnakes (*Boiga irregularis*) on Guam, Hawaii, and Northern Marianas Islands, the Pacific News Center reported in July. Funding also was provided earlier in the year from the OIA and Department of Defense to support the USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services' brown treesnake interdiction program on Guam. Additional funds were provided to Wildlife Services, U. S. Geological Survey, and other state and federal agencies to control the pest. Continued funding is critical to reverse the negative impact to Guam's ecosystem, infrastructure, economy, and human health and safety caused by this invasive species of snake.

Bird strikes maintain public attention

Several bird strikes have made the national media recently. In April, ABC News reported on Delta Flight 1063 that ingested a bird in its right engine on takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy Airport. The cabin began filling with smoke and the pilot quickly turned the plane around and made an emergency landing. Less than a week later, a Jet Blue flight collided with a bird upon takeoff from Winchester Airport just north of New York City. The Embraer E190 ingested a bird, and the pilot turned the plane around for a successful emergency landing. In late July, United Airlines Flight 1475 was on approach to Denver International Airport when it collided with an unknown species of bird that ripped a large hole in the jet's nose, just under the pilot's window, ABC News reported. Despite the apparent severity of the damage, the strike did not cause major damage or human injury, and the pilot was able to land safely. Remains of the bird were sent to the Smithsonian Institution for identification, but investigators guessed it was probably a large bird, such as a goose or a duck. No one was injured in any of these bird strikes.

Gang of raccoons terrorizes North Seattle residents

A pack of aggressive raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) has been terrorizing residents in an area around the North Seattle Community College campus, the *Seattle Times* reported in July. Local resident Rick Greenquist and his Labrador retriever, who frequently go on walks near the college, have been attacked twice by the raccoons.



Figure 1. In Washington state, trapped raccoons must be euthanized, according to law. (Photo courtesy J. Caudell)

Another resident had to protect his child from raccoons. When Greenquist contacted animal-control agencies, he was told they could not help. The Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Seattle Animal Shelter stated that they typically use education to address these situations. At Greenquist's request, the college has begun posting warning signs of the aggressive raccoons, and a private pest control company has been hired to remove the raccoons. According to state law, however, the animals that are caught must be euthanized unless a relocation permit is issued, something that is rarely done for urban wildlife. Greenquist said he believes the traps are better than doing nothing in an area frequented by people with pets and children (Figure 1).

Mute swans a challenge for wildlife managers in the Midwest

States around the Great Lakes have been a refuge for mute swans (*Cygnus olor*) for years, but this has been slowly changing over the past several years, and wildlife managers are working to control the increasing numbers of the swans (Figure 2). The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has taken an aggressive stance with the birds, issuing permits to kill them and



Figure 2. Flock of mute swans gather at a marina. (Photo courtesy Dan Young)

working with Wildlife Services to reduce the nuisance swans' numbers to a manageable level. The *TimesHerald.com* reported that there are an estimated 15,000 mute swans in Michigan alone. The DNR would like to reduce that number to about 2,000 by the year 2030 to prevent the swans from having a negative impact on native species. Swans have also been known to attack swimmers and boaters, and, according to *AnimalPeopleNews.org*, were recently responsible for drowning an animal handler in Cook County, Illinois, who was using mute swans and dogs to deter Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*). The nesting swan attacked the handler when he approached them in a kayak. The bird caused his kayak to flip, and the bird continued to act aggressively toward the man until he drowned. While this is an extreme occurrence, mute swans have been known to punch holes in jet ski hulls. Kevin Hatman from the Michigan Human Society would like to see nonlethal techniques used, and the Humane Society of the United States has asked that state officials place a moratorium on the lethal removal of swans. Russ Mason of the Michigan DNR stated that nonlethal techniques of control are not very effective at lowering population numbers of swans because of the birds' long life span. Once the population is

reduced, however, nonlethal techniques could be used to maintain the population size, he said.

Really big snake makes national news

Florida not only has a lot of invasive snakes, but it has some of the largest specimens. In August, *TG Daily.com* reported that the largest Burmese python (*Python molurus bivittatus*) ever captured in the wild was taken in Florida. The 17.5-foot-long, 165-pound snake, contained a record 87 eggs. The previous record for a snake captured in the wild was a 16.8-foot-long python that also was found in Everglades National Park. Pythons have been in Florida for about 25 years. Researchers from the Florida Museum believe there could be hundreds of thousands of pythons in the Everglades. There are no known natural predators of the snake in Florida. Pythons are known to prey on large birds, deer, bobcats, and alligators.

Scouts rescue leader from beaver

In August, a Boy Scout leader was attacked by a rabid, 45-pound beaver (*Castor canadensis*) in upstate New York while leading scouts on a float-trip down the Delaware River, the *New York Daily News* reported. The 51-year-old scoutmaster and four scouts were wading in the river when he saw bubbles in the water and felt something brush against his leg. The next thing he knew, he felt something latch onto his chest. He kept pulling at the 45-pound beaver, managing to detach it, but the animal kept up its attack. The man called for help, and the boys came to the rescue, managing to get their scout leader and the beaver, which had latched onto the man's hand, to shore. The boys killed the beaver by hurling a large stone on it. The beaver was submitted to local health officials, and it tested positive for rabies. The scoutmaster suffered 6 puncture wounds over his body and was treated for rabies.

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